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Townsend, Charles Edward

A gift to the nations

[Detroit]

1920

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Box 99 Townsend, Charles Edward, 1868-
... A gift to the nations, address by Hon. Chas. E. Townsend... Great Lakes - St. Lawrence tidewater congress, Detroit, Michigan, July 22, 1920 at the Detroit board of commerce... Great Lakes-St. Lawrence tidewater association, July 1920.
cover-title, 7 p. 22½ cm.

At head of title: The way to the sea.

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 11:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 3-7-97 INITIALS: RB

TRACKING # : 22179

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. . . *The Way to the Sea* . . .

A Gift to the Nations

Address by

HON. CHAS. E. TOWNSEND
OF MICHIGAN

GREAT LAKES-ST. LAWRENCE
TIDEWATER CONGRESS
DETROIT, MICHIGAN
JULY 22, 1920
AT THE
DETROIT BOARD OF COMMERCE

"Not much longer are modern progress and constructive genius going to possess their souls in patience, with present day rail transportation, choked and inadequate as it is; with the cost of transportation in excess of 25% of the value of the thing transported, and this cost still mounting; with human suffering from insufficient fuel a constant spectre; with productive industry in partial paralysis for lack of power; with all these necessaries and agencies crying for relief and a great practically unused natural waterway on whose ample bosom could easily float much of the surplus freight which either rots on the farm, congests at railroad terminals or perishes still born for lack of transportation nourishment."

GREAT LAKES-ST. LAWRENCE TIDEWATER ASSOCIATION

JULY 1920

SENATOR TOWNSEND has been called the Father of the Lakes-to-Ocean undertaking. He was first in this generation to initiate proposals for the development of this route and he has been steadfast and powerful in its advocacy.

His address before the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Tidewater Congress was one of the convincing presentations of this project at that notable gathering. He did more than outline an economic argument—he gave vivid utterance to the American spirit of enterprise and international comity.

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Tidewater Association
IN THE COUNCIL OF STATES
CHAS. P. CRAIG, Executive Director

Oct 7-12, 1923

Address of Charles E. Townsend, July 22, 1920 Before the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Tidewater Congress

Production and transportation are the two great foundations of industrial, commercial and civic life. They lie at the very basis of organized society and civilization has progressed in almost exact ratio to the ability of the people efficiently, expeditiously and economically to produce and exchange their products. Production has from the beginning been compelled, in order to meet the necessities of the producer. Gradually through the decades this necessity has enlarged from the animal needs of the individual to those of his family. Gradually society created new needs, converted luxuries into necessities and the great industrial and commercial evolution has been the result. The demands of barter and trade made transportation of primal importance and today, as in the beginning, the creation and distribution of the needs of men are the fundamental matters which give humanity concern. It might be interesting to many for me to trace the steps in social and industrial progress and the inexorable logic of events would lead us inevitably to the subject which has induced this most important meeting. I know, however, I can safely assume that all men and women who are in attendance at this meeting have given thought to these things and are now especially interested to know whether the proposed Ocean Way which connects the Great Lakes and the Atlantic via the Welland Canal and the St. Lawrence River is essential to greater production by furnishing and stimulating greater and more satisfactory means of distribution as well as by recovering power which for centuries has been running to waste but which is now needed to work for and warm the people.

AN END LONG DESIRED

For many years I have been deeply impressed with the possibilities for almost limitless good which have passed unused into the Atlantic over an international waterway controlled by two nations speaking the same language, inspired by the same ideals of civilization, having involved the same unconflicting purposes to be served. A number of years ago I had what seemed to some to be a vain hope that I might strike the spark which would fire the two great English speaking nations with an interest and enthusiasm that would at least shed sufficient light on the subject to demand international attention. I secured the unanimous vote of the United States Senate for a resolution requesting the President to enter into negotiations with Canada for the purpose of investigating and reporting on this project. Canada was aroused and various ocean ways between the Great Lakes region and the sea were widely discussed. The Administration at Washington did not find time to devote to this great project. Two

years ago, however, the Senate placed a provision upon the River and Harbor Bill authorizing the International Joint Commission to take up the matter for investigation and report. Its honorable members after complying with the international preliminary formalities are now at work and it is for the purpose of giving those interested an opportunity to participate further in this movement that we are now assembled. I say, "those who are interested." This list should include every American, every Canadian citizen. Unfortunately the number is not so comprehensive. Comparatively few people in either country have given thought and study to the subject. Thanks to active organizations on both sides of the international line, information is being disseminated and the Ocean Waterway for the deepest sea craft is now one of the very vital questions before the two nations.

May I pause here long enough to pay a deserved tribute to the committee which has had charge of this meeting. Without wishing to make invidious comparisons, I am sure I shall be pardoned if I say that when it comes to making arrangements for a gathering of this kind, R. J. MacLean is ocean size and of truly international proportions. If all the men prominently identified with the oceanway are not on this program or guests of this convention it is not due to any oversight by this gentleman. The local committee and the great general committees and organizations of business men who are doing so much unselfish work are entitled to the gratitude of all. They have mine profoundly.

If the world were not quite so busy and it had the disposition and power to weigh influences, the future historian would record among the great those men and women who greatly and intelligently forward a project which, in my humble judgment, will entitle them to be classed properly with the men who gave steam boats and railroads to humanity.

MEETING A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

To the members of the International Joint Commission I will say you are now considering one of the greatest problems which this present period of great problems has offered for solution. You have organized for its solution under the mandate of two great nations. Your investigation and report will be awaited with eager earnestness. Not much longer are modern progress and constructive genius going to possess their souls in patience, with present day rail transportation, choked and inadequate as it is; with the cost of transportation in excess of 25% of the value of the thing transported, and this cost still mounting; with human suffering from insufficient fuel a constant spectre; with productive industry in partial paralysis for lack of power; with all these necessaries and agencies crying for relief and a great practically unusued natural waterway on whose ample bosom could easily float much of the surplus freight which either rots on the farm, congests at railroad terminals or perishes still born for lack of transportation nourishment; a waterway which would not only carry much of the mighty commerce of the great middle northwest to its market at the seaboard but which contains more than 1,700,000 available horse power of energy which if used would release more than 25,000,000 tons of coal now used in generating power for manufacturing and public utility purposes. With these conditions maintaining the people are demanding that this great subject be thoroughly

investigated and relief granted at the earliest possible time. This enterprise would be entitled to immediate action even if the cost were taken from the treasuries of the two countries without prospect of direct recoupment, but when we know that the immediately salable value of the power developed would more than pay the cost of construction and maintenance there seems to be no good reason why longer delay should be experienced.

WITHOUT A MOMENT'S DELAY

My business judgment may be faulty, my engineering ability is not entitled to respect and my enthusiasm for this project may be exaggerated, but I have some appreciation of business principles; I have talked with eminent engineers and have read their reports, I certainly have no selfish purpose to serve in my advocacy. If I had the power and the resources of these two republics I would not wait another year nor another month before I would engage the brains and ability and set them at work to emancipate and utilize the great transportation and power possibilities of the St. Lawrence route. I would expect to yield to the people of those two countries not only big financial dividends from their business due to added and improved transportation facilities but I would bring them the health and comfort which would come from the greatest heating and power plant in the world.

RELIEF FROM FUEL FAMINE

The only organized objection I have heard to this project comes from the great state of New York. It is but fair to state, however, that there is a much stronger sentiment there now in favor of it. Of course, every thoughtful, intelligent man knows that the northeastern states would be the greatest power beneficiaries from this development. Hydro electric power cannot be profitably and efficiently conducted more than 350 miles; within that radius would be included New York and every New England state. More electric power would be generated than is now developed in the great manufacturing state of Michigan. It would equal more than one-third of the electrical production capacity of New York and would be equal to about three-fourths of that of Massachusetts. May I remind the great manufacturing section of the northeast that its only hope of maintaining its supremacy in manufacturing lies in its ability to secure cheaper power and fuel and a greater abundance of them? It has been estimated reliably that there is a maximum possible 320,000,000 horse power hydro electric power in the United States of which more than 70% is west of the Mississippi River. The last official information which has been available to me shows that only about 4,870,000 horse power has been developed. New York and New England have more nearly employed their hydro electric possibilities than has the West, into which the centers of population and production have steadily and yet most markedly made their way. Today when the Middle West is demanding black fuel and transportation facilities to market the industrial East is consuming coal while in its midst is running to waste white fuel, the equivalent of about 25,000,000 tons of coal. And please always bear in mind that when coal or gas is used it is destroyed and can never be restored while white fuel exists so long as

water runs. Using it does not destroy or diminish it. The coal mine "peters" out. Striking miners or mercenary operators can shut off the supply. Year in and year out, night and day, the St. Lawrence throughout the centuries is pregnant with power. Its source is exhaustless, its working hours are controlled neither by unions nor limited by capitalistic greed and selfishness. This power must, however, be harnessed and permitted to do the world's work. Dams, locks and pools must be created. The material is at hand. It is a more than self supporting proposition. Nature, common sense and prudence mark the clear way.

AN IMPERATIVE NEED

The late war clearly demonstrated to Canada and the United States the imperative need of this waterway and its hydro electric power for the purposes of the national defense. Thousands of our best boys could have been saved to their families and to our countries if the material which they needed could have been furnished them in time over seas. Since the armistice was signed the war time demand for raw materials, such as grain, ores and lumber needed by the world continues. The railroads of the United States were placed under the unified, arbitrary, unlimited control of the government and yet even after the war it was unable to operate these roads to meet the demands of commerce. The owners of the railroads, concededly the most efficient men for the business, in the world, are now unable to deliver the products demanding rail carriage. War time freight congestion continues in peace and it must be patent to everyone that water routes must be established where possible, for rail and water both will be required to serve even approximately the ever increasing demands for transportation. With the St. Lawrence route completed the eastern classification railroads operated at 100% efficiency, there would still be inadequate transportation facilities. But fortunately for the peace, progress and prosperity of the people of these two great countries there is another means of transportation more comprehensive, more universal in its application than either and yet contributory to both, viz., permanent highways laid out, constructed and maintained to serve the general welfare and the common defense in peace and war. I am quite as deeply interested in such a highway system as I am in the proposed waterway and shall neglect no proper opportunity to present and advocate its virtues and benefits. Canada and the United States need comprehensive, thoroughly developed transportation systems of rail, water and highway. Railroads and highways cost much money to build and maintain. Their destruction begins the moment they are opened to traffic. In large sections of the country these two are the only known practical means of transportation. Water possibilities are limited and yet with all these possibilities improved, traffic would test their utmost capacity.

A CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISE

The water route which we advocate and which this Honorable Commission is now officially considering should, in my opinion, be constructed through the co-operative efforts of both countries under such arrangements as would be mutually satisfactory and beneficial. Both countries require an ocean way. The international boundary

waters furnish the means and opportunity for both. It can be constructed and maintained without eventual cost to either. If these things be so, why is this project so long delayed? I cannot believe that the railroads are now opposing it. I think it is admitted that certain products are better, more expeditiously and more economically carried by water than by rail. Ores, coal, grain, lumber are examples. Especially is this true where they are shipped to tide water. It is being demonstrated every day that the railroads themselves, as well as the people, would be blessed if all possible traffic could be diverted to the water. There is business enough to give employment to both rail and water carriers. Conditions have changed since the railroads felt it was necessary for them to strangle even latent water competition. It has been the quite general rule of history that transportation facilities have created transportation business. When electric interurban lines paralleled the steam roads the latter did not suffer financially. But whether the St. Lawrence route would injure the railroads or not is beside the question. The real issue is the national—the general welfare, and I do not believe that there is any organized or concerted efforts on the part of railroad owners to obstruct the utilization of this waterway.

DESTRUCTIVE REASONINGS

I know there are some people in the eastern states who are offering two antagonistic reasons for opposing this project. One is the fear that the waterway will divert the business from New York and other eastern metropoli. They see visions of a larger Montreal and of growing lake cities where international shipments and exchanges will be made. I admit that as a representative of the American people I would not be disturbed if the people of the rest of the country did not have to pay so great a tribute to remote eastern cities in the way of additional freights on raw materials, of additional costs due to congestion and destruction at eastern terminals. The raw material is in the middle west and after it has been shipped to the east and converted into finished products, much of it is freighted back to its native home to market. Is it a crime against the people to manufacture at point of production the material required for their use and to transport the surplus to the seaboard or foreign market at the least possible expense? Is it wise at a time when the menace of short food rations confronts the people and the poorest paid class of our producers, the farmers, are being urged to produce more, that these farmers shall be put to the expense of placing wheat destined for Liverpool on boats at the lake city, then transfer it to the elevator at Buffalo, from which it must again be moved to the railroad car and then at New York again transferred to another elevator, from which it is placed on the ocean liner? The great demand of this time, as it will be of all future time, is for as cheap necessities of life as can be furnished consistent with the most just, equitable and economical requirements of production. No, our two countries are not so much interested in building and maintaining great metropoli as they are in sustaining and serving great, prosperous, happy and progressive people.

But, say these objectors when driven from the metropolis arguments, this scheme is not feasible, it is impracticable, the winters will close the route a portion of the year. Well, if it is impractical

its construction will not injure the seaboard cities, and anyway if all the practical engineers are mistaken and the power produced will not pay the cost, the two countries will not expend on the enterprise more than a fraction of what the United States has expended on the splendid harbor of New York alone, which in an emergency the people cannot use on account of a congestion which imposes an embargo upon shipments quite as effectual as does the frost upon the lake transportation.

The late war demonstrated another fact which I declared several years ago, viz., that the lake region could build better ships at less cost and more expeditiously than could be built anywhere else in the world. I am told that 75% of the steel ships built and sent abroad during the war were constructed in Great Lakes yards and yet the limited dimension of the Welland Canal prevented only smaller sizes passing through or else the vessels had to be knocked down and sent through in sections. At a time when there is such a demand for merchantmen could the country do better or act more wisely than open the lake yards to ocean craft? The great peace navies of the lakes could go down to the sea when lake navigation closes and participate in the coast wise traffic and some of them could engage in the foreign trade.

BENEFITS TO ALL THE PEOPLE

Viewed from every angle of national welfare, this international project should be carried to completion without undue delay. Both countries are suffering from lack of these transportation facilities. Industry requires this additional power. The possibilities of this route should be developed internationally and its benefits should inure to the people and to all of them. The thought of permitting corporations to develop and appropriate these benefits should not be entertained. These waters and their potentialities belong to the people of these two friendly nations of common lineage and common hopes and ideals. If there now be any jealousies between the two countries this matchless waterway will wash them away. In serving one it will not lessen service to the other. Its upkeep will be infinitesimal. Its benefits will be immeasurable. For more than a century this water between Canada and the United States has been running idly to the sea. Not a fort has marred the scenery of its banks; not a war-like camp has been pitched upon its shores; not a hostile gun has disturbed its peaceful journey from Duluth to Montreal. Has not the hour now struck when these waters shall be decorated with the peaceful flags of all nations floating at the peaks of ocean ships engaged not alone in provincial lake traffic but in the commerce of the world? I want to live to see Detroit and the other great cities of these lakes in both countries become ocean ports into and from which will enter and clear the greatest ships of the world. But whether I do or not, others will see the accomplished fact, for so sure as industry requires transportation and power so sure will this waste of transportation and power be reclaimed and utilized.

A GAIN TO ALL THE WORLD

I have confined my remarks largely to the benefits which come to the people of Eastern Canada, of the Northeast United States, and

of the Great Lakes region. This latter, of course, means all that vast productive empire which is tributary to it; (within an hour from the Great Lakes is the center of population and production). I have done this in order that my facts may be directly discernible to all. It is nevertheless true that the complete project would be greatly beneficial to all of both countries. These countries and the world are suffering for lack of production. Fuel and transportation facilities are fundamentally necessary to both. If we can add to existing carriage lines thousands of additional miles (for this waterway will not be a single track nor a double track line merely, it will be a course of many tracks) to a region now congested and the richest naturally in the world, is there any doubt about the benefits being universal?

There is a certain limited amount of power and heat producing fuel in existence. If we can add to that fuel the equivalent of millions of tons of coal annually, will there be any region which will not be aided by the benefaction? The project is as wide in its benefits as the confines of these two republics; aye, is world wide in the scope of its beneficent influences.

One of the most valuable and comprehensive contributions which has been made to information on the power possibilities of this project can be found in an address made December 10th, 1919, before the National River and Harbor Convention at Washington, D. C., by Hon. A. T. Vogelsang, Assistant Secretary of the Interior. It is in pamphlet form and I commend it to your careful reading. I desire to acknowledge my thanks to Mr. Voglesang for certain facts in his address which I have consulted and used.

It must be clear to everyone that this subject is a great one. It is not expected in the limited time at my disposal that I shall completely or largely cover it. You are to have some eminent men speak to you during this convention, and I am sure that you will be enthused as I am. The time is ripe for intelligent, concerted and untiring effort. The project will advantage business and enlightened selfishness will be warranted in great activity. But the great impelling motive should be the national and international contribution to the peace, safety, and prosperity of the people.

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